

April 9, 2007

Mr. Thomas Williams
City Manager, City of Milpitas
457 East Calaveras Boulevard
Milpitas, CA 95035

Dear Mr. Williams:

Thank you for your letter regarding Milpitas BART Station – Proposed Station Layout for 65% Design and FEIR Scoping dated January 22, 2007. It is my understanding that over the last several months VTA and Milpitas staffs, in partnership, have been exploring station alignment and campus options, Concepts A through D, which were presented to the Milpitas City Council on January 16, 2007.

VTA and Milpitas staffs proceeded with site planning activities within the BART station area with the common goal of ensuring that (1) the BART extension supports the City's long-term land-use vision for the area, (2) cost is contained to improve the project's competitiveness for \$750 million in federal funding, and (3) the new transit center operates efficiently to maximize ridership. With appreciation for the city's time and efforts to explore design options for the proposed BART station, we have taken some time to carefully examine the feasibility of the City's design preferences and assess the impacts to project cost, as consistent with our common goal.

Throughout the site planning process, VTA staff has made every effort to maintain consistency with the Milpitas Transit Area Plan. All concepts discussed with City staff have supported high-density, transit-oriented development and good design practices proposed in the City's Plan.

At the City's request, we are currently considering the relocation of the bus transit center to the property adjacent to the west entrance of the BART station. This location will be evaluated in terms of vehicular, bicycle and pedestrian circulation within the transit center and on surrounding surface streets, as well as compatibility with BART station facilities and adjacent land uses. VTA staff will continue to evaluate the new transit center option. If it is determined that, given all factors under consideration, this location is a more efficient site for bus operations, VTA will replace the transit center configuration currently shown in 35% design with a transit center situated west of the BART station.

We understand that the Milpitas City Council has serious concerns with a long-term surface-parking approach at the BART Station. Currently, VTA is conducting a Parking and Implementation Study to evaluate the practicability of the estimated 2030 parking demand and identify implementation strategies that support the City's long-term land-use vision while also addressing the service requirements and capital constraints of the project. This plan will necessarily take into consideration the preferences and planning objectives of the City.

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However, to provide VTA with needed flexibility for project implementation, it is necessary to include and evaluate the impacts of both parking structure and surface parking options in our state and federal environmental documents. This approach will support both VTA and City efforts in this area and will not preclude the implementation of other development projects at this location.

Beginning in July 2006, VTA and City of Milpitas staffs engaged in an extensive process to develop conceptual level site plans for the long-term vision of the BART Station. Aerial alignment options were included in site-planning efforts as a means of significantly reducing project cost. Given the importance of achieving an acceptable cost effectiveness rating in the FTA New Starts process, the leadership demonstrated by City staff in considering a modified aerial option was significant and much appreciated.

All concepts developed during our site planning process have their benefits as well as their challenges, and these were identified at a conceptual level during this process. When all concepts were presented to the Milpitas Community Working Group and Milpitas' Transportation Subcommittee last December, both committees expressed a preference for a retained-cut station, but also considered the potential benefits of the modified aerial option, referred to as Concept D. Based on this input, we had a reasonable expectation that the Milpitas City Council would also be open to further consideration of this modified aerial option. However, at the January 2007 meeting, the Council clearly stated its opposition to any aerial option. Because the identified benefits associated with an aerial alignment to project costs would be difficult to achieve without the support of the Milpitas City Council, VTA will remove all aerial options for the BART Station from further consideration.

The City Council also expressed a preference for Concept C, as indicated in your letter, citing perceived local benefits for access to future developments and the Great Mall as its rationale. As we weigh these benefits against impacts to project cost, operating efficiencies, and regional benefits, shifting the station north poses some difficult challenges.

It is important to recognize that one of the principal reasons for locating a BART station in this area is to establish an intermodal connection to the existing VTA Light Rail service. This station provides an essential transit link to the "Golden Triangle" job center that significantly influences the projected ridership for the BART project. By moving the BART station to the north away from the Light Rail station, walking distance between these two transit services is increased by approximately 300 feet. As transfers become less convenient, system ridership decreases.

Shifting the station north also introduces considerable construction-related complications. Placing the station beneath Montague Expressway requires a wider excavation with a longer roadway bridge span that creates a cascade of additional challenges. The wider span requires a deeper bridge structure for the roadway that necessitates lowering the track alignment approximately five feet. This deeper excavation extends along the alignment far to the north and to the south of the station until the lower trackway conforms to the original alignment. The additional excavation extends deeper into the water table and involves handling of additional volumes of hazardous materials known to exist in this area. These aspects create additional

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costs, as well as impacts to the surrounding communities in the form of construction impacts, increased truck-haul traffic, and risks associated with handling more hazardous materials.

If the station is located beneath Montague Expressway, the need for significant emergency ventilation facilities is unlikely to be avoided. Besides the additional expense incurred, this equipment requires facilities of considerable size that would occupy valuable land space that would be better utilized for transit-oriented development.

The modified retained cut option requires a split concourse configuration to serve both sides of Montague Expressway. With a split concourse, VTA anticipates increased operating costs to the project for additional station agent and maintenance personnel and facilities. This configuration may also require additional elevator facilities for the mobility impaired.

After carefully reviewing these considerations, it is VTA's assessment that the BART Station should be in a retained cut located between Montague Expressway and Capitol Avenue. This design option best balances the multiple, and at times conflicting, demands that need to be supported by the BART project.

The continued participation and support from the City of Milpitas is critical to the success of the BART project. I look forward to working with you on overcoming the many project challenges and want to thank you for your commitment. Please be assured of my personal appreciation for the cooperation and thoughtful analysis provided by your staff. All of us at VTA look forward to continuing our close working relationship. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jack Collins at (408) 321-5930 or me at (408) 321-5559.

Sincerely,



Michael T. Burns
General Manager

c: Milpitas City Council
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Jack Collins, VTA
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